



Crossover

The Story of London Legends basketball

Introduction





At the Damilola Taylor Centre in Peckham, a modest junior basketball programme is doing extraordinary things.

I was introduced to the London Legends via a chance encounter in the park with two of their U18 squad members in 2021. Through them, I met the coaches Timi and Dawud who have cultivated a formidable community spirit on and off the court.

Legends have a real conveyor-belt of talent and have at least ten alumni in high-school and college programmes across the USA. Following this leap into the dark for those talented teenagers is unquestionably a great story. But underpinning these successes on the court, is a focus on supporting and guiding young men and women off it. Despite their success and oversubscription, they still have an open-gym policy, where nobody is turned away.

They do this in the context of drastic underfunding, despite the fact that basketball is the fastest growing sport in the country.

This is the true Legends story, of do-it-yourself community building, and fostering opportunity through the prism of sport where it might otherwise be limited.

Outline





This documentary will tell the story of London Legends through it's players and coaches, as well as the linear ebb and flow of the Legends U16 campaign.

We will follow the most talented figures, already stateside, who may have a shot at the NBA. We will follow the talent who are transitioning from the sports halls of the UK to the stadia of D1 College basketball in the US. We will follow the hopefuls, who may not make it across the pond, but play a key part in Legends success at home in Peckham.

We will speak to coaches, parents, basketball authorities, scouts and the rest. We will tell the full Legends story, from its genesis at the passing of local legend Big Mike Carty; to its climax on NBA draft day (fingers crossed!).

The time for this documentary is now, as interest in basketball continues to grow across the UK. The UK Basketball documentary is inevitable, and the Legends story is the perfect vehicle to launch the sport into mainstream consciousness.



Charo

acters



Elijah Imevbore





Elijah is one of the most talented player in Legends ranks currently. 6'7 at just 14 years old, he is a dominant force with skills and shooting to boot.

Elijah has also spent some time in the US already, with scouts fawning over his deft touch around the rim, skill in the post and shooting potential. It is a matter of when not if, before Elijah is headed to a top US high school to begin his pursuit of a professional career.

But at 14 years old, is he mature enough to handle a new life away from his home comforts? His mum has survived cancer, but it still plays on his mind and pressures his mind during the game.

Will his power and size be negated as he climbs the age groups?

The Twins

‘Hollywood’ Haydin

Another big talent in the U16 squad is point guard Haydin Edwards–Meade.
His talent is obvious, with great handles and basketball IQ.

Haydin is a showman, with the nickname ‘Hollywood Hay’, he is an extrovert and popular figure. He is desperate to go the US, and basketball is his life.

However, it is harder for smaller guards to transition to the US, as without athletic gifts, they become a small fish in a big pond.

By his own admission, Haydin is not academic, and Basketball is his only escape. As he gets older, how will he cope with adversity and new challenges?





Micah

Haydin's twin, Micah, is a more cerebral and reserved character. He likes manga, art, and writing.

Micah came to basketball later in life, playing the game more often as his athletic gifts became undeniable. He is a hustle player, with a big reach, rebounding and flashy dunks.

Micah and Haydin are different personalities and they are perhaps a little distant. It is an interesting dynamic to follow. Will the game bring them together, or send them down different paths?

Micah is also likely US-bound, but is his heart in it, and will his artistic gifts and softer nature take him away from the game?



Luke Bamgboye





Luke is the great hope of Legends alumni in the NBA. At 6'10 with agility and skill, Luke has athletic gifts tailor-made for the modern game. He is also academically gifted and could have gone to Harvard.

After spending 4 years in US high school, Luke has begun his rookie season at D1 VCU in Richmond, Virginia. This is a top 40 basketball programme in the US. He has been ranked top 60 in the entire class across the nation.

If all goes to plan, Luke will declare for the NBA draft in the next 2-3 years. The college step-up is a different ball game however, and we will follow the peaks and troughs of his time at VCU.

Can Luke make the next big step and dominate at collegiate level?

The Coaches





Timi and Dawud are also fantastic characters that will be ever-present throughout the film.

Timi is a British-Nigerian Peckham native, who grew up on the Aylesbury Estate before a key role for Basketball Nigeria. He is the hands-on, driving force behind the programme.

Dawud is the perfect narrator, an ex-collegiate athlete with stories for days and a charming Tennessee-drawl. He's the link man between UK and The States, the man with the big picture.

Context





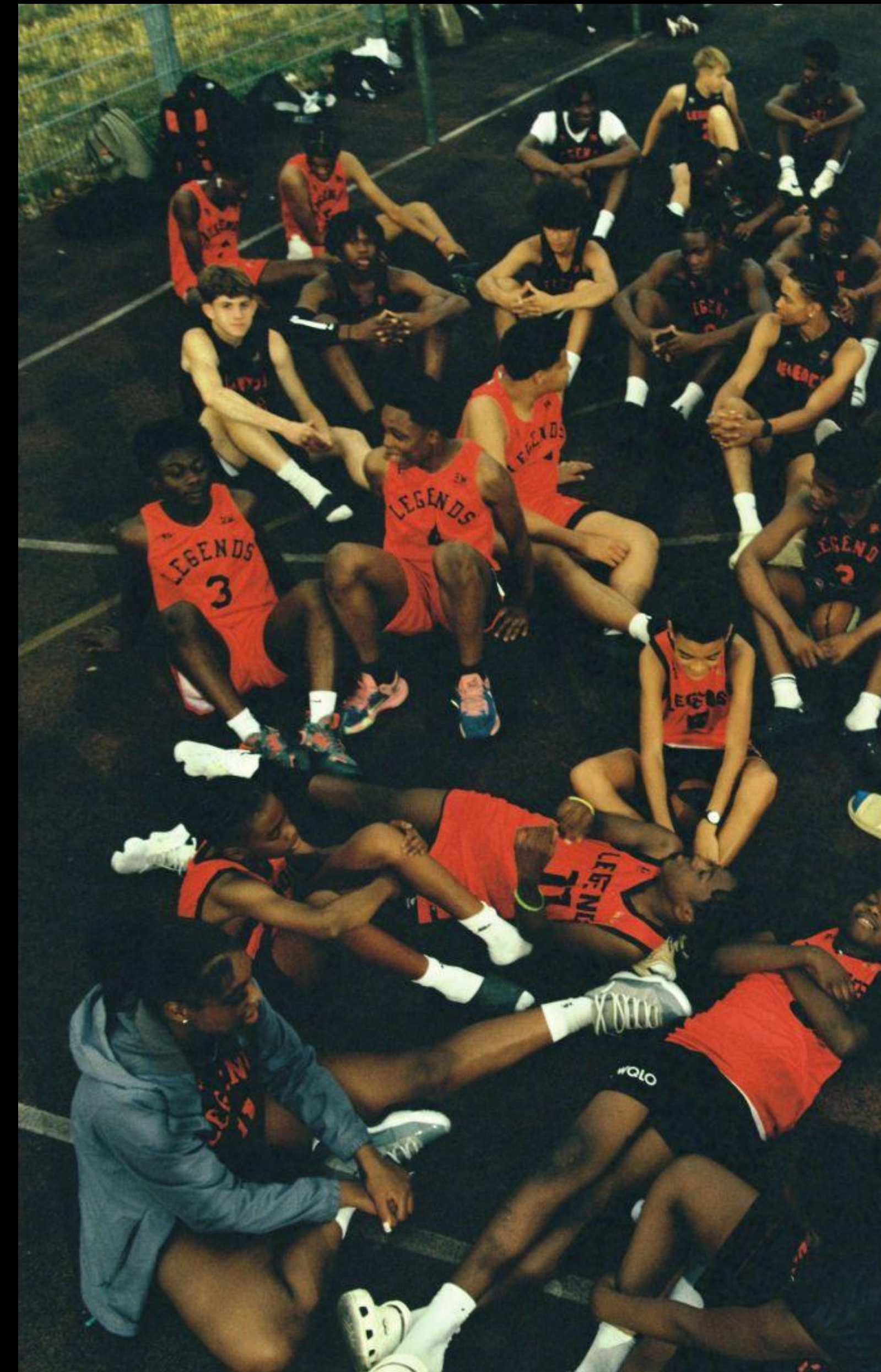
The London Legends have a reputation in the UK. Many of their alumni play basketball in the US, leaving the UK as soon as 15 to join elite high-school and College basketball programmes across the pond.

This reputation is double-edged. They are lauded for their coaching and their pathways to the US; but criticised by some prominent figures in the UK for shipping some of the countries most skilled junior players abroad at such a young age. As a result, Dawud believes that Legends players are often shunned for National team selection.

Timi and Dawud argue fervently that the main objective of the programme is furthering opportunity for its youth in a nation that does not care about basketball. If this means going abroad, then they will do what it takes.

Given the socio-economic makeup of Peckham, it is hard to deny their point of view. Moving talented but disadvantaged youth to private education institutes abroad is an undeniable opportunity. They are broadening the horizons of many young people in basketball and in life.

But US Sports is a harsh environment. Is 14 too young for such pressures in an alien and unforgiving new reality? These kids are some of the best players in their class in the UK, but one of thousands in the States. Some Legends alumni have travelled abroad only to come home months later, citing homesickness and loneliness.





The fact remains that Basketball in the UK remains drastically underfunded and unrecognised. Facilities are lacking. Indoor courts are few and far between, and outdoor courts are usually multi-use-gaming areas with tatty rims and loose concrete underfoot. Legends players struggle to shoot 3-point shots as the roof is too low.

London Legends is fully volunteer and donation led. When they reach the National finals, they pay for the own transport and accommodation in Manchester. Basketball receives no sponsorship, despite its growing popularity at grassroots level.

It is therefore a programme ran through dedication and love for the sport and the community against remarkable obstacles. Legends have to create their own foundations on limited resources, and it is no surprise that they the push their talent pool towards new opportunities abroad.

Approach





A big inspiration for this film is the documentary classic, 'Hoop Dreams'. It is one of Timi and Dawud's favourite films, and an all-time documentary classic. We want to honour the spirit of Hoop Dreams, with a similarly intimate methodology.

The way in which the audience came to know William Gates and Arthur Agee is expertly crafted through hours of footage shot over a 5 year timespan. We want to know the players, the coaches and their families at a similarly intimate level, creating a modern masterpiece with a nod to Hoop Dreams. We don't want to miss a beat; through the highs and the lows.

Our interactions will be candid, fly-on-the-wall, in the moment, and in natural scenarios. Director and DOP will be off camera in voice and participation.

My documentary work to date also puts an emphasis on cinematography and finds beauty in the everyday. This film has infinite visual potential, particularly in the dynamism of the on-court action as well as the varied locations in both the UK and US. We want to highlight the different worlds and the huge changes that our crossover protagonists experience.

Timi and Dawud also have an extensive bank of archive footage and photos that will help us tell the exhaustive story of The Legends. From its humble beginnings, where it simply provided an open gym for the local youth, to its global direction now – we have every frame needed to immerse and engage the audience.

As Coach Dawud exclaims, there will likely only be one seminal documentary about UK Basketball, and we hope to make sure it is ours.





There is big appetite for a British basketball film, even despite its lack of support and attention on these shores. It is growing rapidly amongst young people, and is the second most played team sport at grassroots level in the UK after football.

The success of US documentary series such as 'The Last Dance' and 'Last Chance U' provide a blueprint, with the UK stories in Crossover providing a new slant on a globally popular sport.

The time for an emerging British basketball is now, and Timi and Dawud are pioneers. This film will launch basketball into British consciousness, and soon you will not be able to ignore it.



Thank you